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Ann Eme
Loyola Marymount University

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Community Gardens and Environmental Justice in the LA Area: A Comparative Analysis

Ann Eme

Advisor: Dr. Michele Romolini

Loyola Marymount University Los Angeles, CA 90045



Introduction

In the realm of environmental studies, researchers in urban ecology have been able to find that urban vegetation and green space produce beneficial outcomes. Community gardens specifically have also been known to promote healthy relationships with local communities, promote mental wellness, and promote youth empowerment through civic action. By engaging members in their environment in both a holistic and remediating way, community gardening can be a form of environmental justice in urban communities, and particularly in communities of color, which have been known to receive unequal environmental benefits and protection.

Methods

This research thus intends to comparatively analyze community gardens in cities within the Los Angeles County, of differing socioeconomic demographics, in an attempt to determine how they operate and incorporate environmental justice frameworks to their organizations. Methods will include identifying appropriate gardens for comparison, site visitations and general observations, background historical data on the cities where the gardens are located, and qualitative comparative case study research. Community garden organizational leaders will be interviewed and observed on how they incorporate equity, access, and preventative measures within their programs. Sample research questions include:

- How was this community garden created?
- What community needs does this garden serve?
- Are there specific funds used to sustain this garden? If so, from where? And if not, why?

Purpose

The Environmental Protection Agency states that no group of people, including racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal programs and policies (Bullard 1996). It is then the responsibility of public policy lawmakers and those in positions of power to offer support and give attention to community organizations that work strategically to combat prevalent issues of environmental injustice. This research, as it intends to observe and analyze the intentions, efficiency, and overall progress of local community gardens, will also hope to serve as an inspiration to encourage increased support for grassroots and not-for-profit organizing in underserved areas. Most importantly, this research also intends to approach intersectionality within the lens of environmental justice, as it deals with issues of race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status in relation to community gardening.

Keywords

community gardens, environmental justice, greenspace, health and wellness, civic action, race, public policy, environmental racism, justice research, equity, accessibility, sustainability, stewardship, community organizing

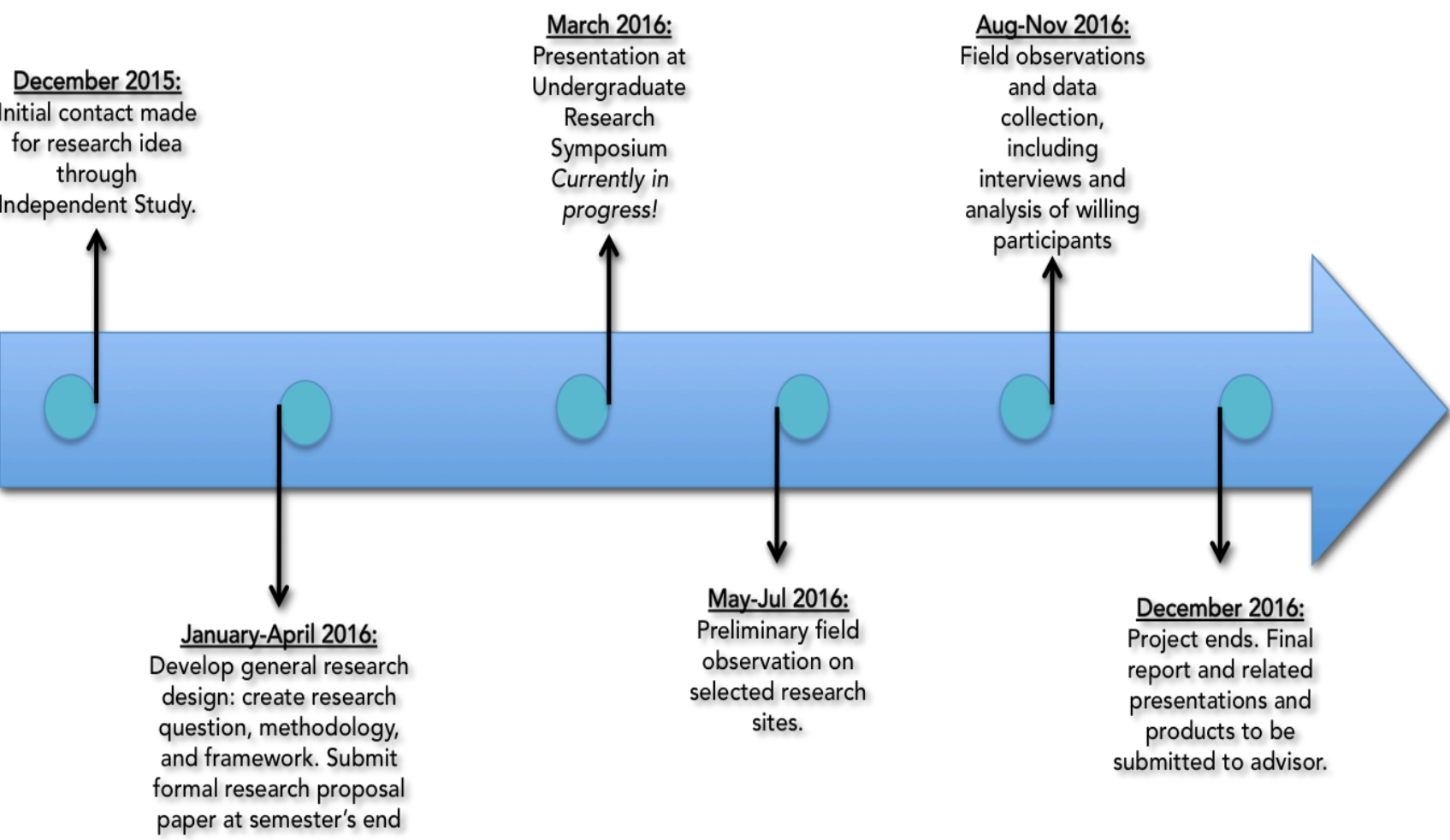
Visuals



Implications & Future Research

Through this study, we intend to better understand whether these local community garden organizations correspond with the environmental justice research framework. Furthermore, it will be important to note the effects environmental justice issues have in the overall success of their. Future research could compare privately owned and locally funded community gardens against the general environmental justice framework. As the research progresses, this study will provide in more detail the finalized environmental justice framework, methods, and extensive background on the selected sites.

Research Timeline



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